

NEWS RELEASE

Sint Maarten Trust Fund moving forward with airport, housing and debris projects

PHILIPSBURG, January 30, 2019 – The Steering Committee of the Sint Maarten Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience Trust Fund decided upon important actions last week to speed up the post-Irma recovery process.

Gathered in Philipsburg, the Steering Committee, consisting of representatives of the governments of St Maarten, the Netherlands and the World Bank, expressed its satisfaction over the decision of the Council of Ministers of Sint Maarten to endorse a financial package for the reconstruction of Princess Juliana International Airport consisting of a grant of US\$50 million from the Sint Maarten Trust Fund financed by the Netherlands and managed by the World Bank and an European Investment Bank loan of US\$50 million.

The Steering Committee also focused on roof and housing repairs, which it sees as a top priority for 2019. As a first step, over 100 houses will be repaired by the St Maarten Housing Development Foundation. A contract for repairs of another 350 private houses will soon be published.

The Committee discussed a strategic framework to guide the use of remaining trust fund resources, based on the priorities of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and guiding principles of the Netherlands, as outlined in the Trust Fund arrangement. The framework will be finalized in April.

Members of the Steering Committee interacted with civil society organizations (CSOs) who are engaged in serving the most vulnerable population. Committee members were impressed by the dynamism of CSOs and their continued commitment to support the resilience of the people of St Maarten. The Trust Fund will continue to broaden partnerships with non-governmental and international organizations to diversify and accelerate reconstruction activities and repairs.

The Steering Committee noted that the actions are on track for tackling the waste disposal site and related dump fires. In the coming months fire suppression equipment will arrive and the spraying with a solid substance will start to prevent surface fires. Meanwhile, specialized fire fighters will be hired to address the underground fires.

A key element to accelerating progress of the recovery program is the establishment of the National Recovery Program Bureau (NRPB) which will oversee the preparation and implementation of trust funded activities. The Steering Committee was pleased to welcome Claret Connor as the new Director of the NRPB. Connor, a former Minister of Tourism and of Infrastructure, Member of Parliament and erstwhile Executive Director of the St Maarten Chamber of Commerce, brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Trust Fund's work in rebuilding St Maarten. The Steering Committee was also informed about the appointment of the World Bank's Senior Liaison Officer, Doekle Wielinga, based in Sint Maarten.

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